

# WOMEN'S WRITING AND WRITINGS ON WOMEN IN THE GOAN MAGAZINE *O ACADÉMICO* (1940- 1943)<sup>1</sup>

## A ESCRITA DE MULHERES E A ESCRITA SOBRE MULHERES NA REVISTA GOESA *O ACADÉMICO* (1940 – 1943)

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**ABSTRACT:** This article discusses some texts, written by women, as well as texts on women, written by men, in the Goan magazine *O Académico* (1940-1943). Even though *O Académico* is not particularly aimed at women's readership, but at a broader audience – the "Goan youth" – it contains articles that deal with the question of women in the spheres of science, politics and literature. As one of the magazine's objectives was to "emancipate Goan youth intellectually", we understand that young women's education was also within their scope, focusing on the question of women's roles. The Goan intelligentsia that made up the editorial board of the publication revealed their desire for modernization by showing their preoccupation with forward-looking ideas and by providing a space for women to publish their texts.

**KEYWORDS:** Women's writing, Men writing on women, Periodical Press, *O Académico*, Goa.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo discute textos escritos sobre mulheres, por homens e por mulheres, na revista goesa *O Académico* (1940-1943). Embora não tenha sido particularmente voltada as leitoras, mas a um público mais amplo – a "juventude goesa" – a revista contém artigos que abordam a questão da mulher nas esferas da ciência, da política e da literatura. Como um dos seus objetivos era "emancipar intelectualmente a juventude goesa", entendemos que a educação das jovens de Goa estava no escopo da publicação, focando também na questão dos papéis que essas mulheres cumpriam em sua sociedade. Identificamos um desejo de modernização por parte da *intelligentsia* goesa, que compunha o corpo editorial da revista, a partir de uma preocupação com ideias mais progressistas e da presença consistente de escritoras no espaço público proporcionado por *O Académico*.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Escrita de mulheres, Escrita de homens sobre mulheres, Imprensa Periódica, *O Académico*, Goa.

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The early development of the press in Goa and its intense activity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries promoted a series of debates on local issues, one of them being the role women occupied at home, as mothers, daughters and wives, as well as their emergence in the public sphere as writers and teachers. Women's education was so important in Goa that, in 1863, João Felipe de Gouveia published the first periodical specifically aimed at women, *O Recreio das Damas* [Ladies' Leisure]. According to Hélder Garmes (2004, p. 57), it intended to bring to their readers a variety of novels that would be published in instalments, indicating that there was a real concern about the cultural formation of Goan ladies. These novels were never published, though.

Sandra Ataíde Lobo states that the active participation of women in the publishing world was closely connected to the investment in "Portuguese formal education and the establishment of politics as a public experience" (2017, p.72). Lobo also states that

At first the process primarily involved the males, but only a few decades later it was extended to the women of these groups. The longing for proficiency in Portuguese led to the introduction of the language in the private domain, with several householders attempting to ban, quite unsuccessfully, the use of Konkani indoors. This project involved females and offered a new public visibility to women. It had profound consequences in enabling the social and professional achievement of these groups inside and outside Goa. In this case, a convergence of interests occurred between the imperial policy of upholding the Portuguese language and these elites' acknowledgement of the importance of mastering the national language in the pursuit of non-discrimination. The dawn of native Catholic periodicals is firmly linked to this process (LOBO, 2017, p.72).

The interest Goans had in the education of women reflects a worldwide trend: late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century periodicals in Brazil (*A República* [The Republic], *O Jornal das Senhoras* [The Ladies' Journal]) and in Portugal (*A águia* [The Eagle] and *A vida* [Life]) published articles by Nísia Floresta (1810-1885) and Ana de Castro Osório (1872-1935) in which they address the importance of girls' education in Brazil and in Portugal. Likewise, in Goa, *O Mascotte* (The Mascot), a daily newspaper published between 1934 and 1937, and *O Indispensável* (The Indispensable), published between 1894 and 1895,

then between 1906 and 1914, also advocated girls' education according to Fati-ma Gracias (2007, pp. 113 and 115).

Following the same trend, *O Académico*, a magazine published bimonthly in Nova Goa, now Panjim, between 1940 and 1943, presents a keen interest in discussing matters related to the changing role of women in Goan society. Not only are there men writing about issues that concern women's condition, but there are also women debating the most varied themes in its pages, a fact that points to a deep change in society. As Sarbani Guha Ghosal states:

For a long time, there was an accepted belief that all kinds of women's activities should belong to the 'private' domain of the individual and family with no direct bearing upon the state and society. Hence women's issues belong very much to the private domain also. But with the gradual change in the attitude women's questions have started receiving a different dimension (GHOSAL, 2005, p. 793).

Having in mind that women were gradually moving from the private to the public sphere, in this paper we intend to comment and analyse some of the texts published in this magazine by men and women writers, namely A. J. Lima de Faria, Renato de Sá, Sanches de Souza, Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo, Berta Menezes Bragança and Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo e Faria among others, in order to identify whether they succeed in placing Goan women in roles that go beyond those of wife, mother and daughter.

Directed by Quensoá Morto Bandari and edited by a group of Catholic and Hindu Goans that belonged to the *União Académica*, *O Académico* states in its first issue that their ideal is "to emancipate Goan youth":

Its programme? It can be summed up as a supreme desire that persuades our spirits: the emancipation of Goan youth! Our action will always be guided by the *ruby-red* flag waving to the influx of a new life with the motto 'All for youth' embroidered on it – Let's hope that the ardent faith with which we take the first step lasts (EDITORIAL, 1940, p.1 – my translation)<sup>3</sup>.

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3 "O seu programa? Sintetiza-se neste anseio supremo que concita o espírito de todos nós: a emancipação intelectual da mocidade! A sua ação será sempre norteadada pelo estandarte rubro, trepidante ao influxo da vida nova, tendo gravado o seguinte lema 'Tudo pela Mocidade' – Oxalá a fé ardente, com que damos o primeiro passo, logre a perdurar" (EDITORIAL, 1940, p. 1)

Here, we would like to highlight the reference to the colour red in the editorial. According to Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, red is the “essential symbol of vital strength. It embodies ardour and beauty, impulsive and generous will, triumphant and free Eros. It also embodies martial virtues” (1996, p. 888). In the Western world, it is the colour of the Bolshevik revolution, whereas, in Hinduism, red is connected to Durgā<sup>4</sup>, the warrior goddess and one of Śakti’s forms whose function is to “combat demons who threaten the stability of the cosmos” (KINSLEY, 1988, p. 95). Choosing red as the colour of the flag that will guide them evokes meanings that reinforce and go beyond what is explicit in the text. Mentioning the colour red reinforces the images of youth (“vital strength”, “impulsive will”) and of a feisty spirit (“martial virtues” and “revolution”), essential to carry out their ideal, while it goes beyond its established meanings when implicitly evoking a feminine force such as Durgā, which suggests that women would also play an essential role in achieving the emancipation of Goan youth.

We must not forget that their ideal was connected to the intellectual sphere; therefore, the articles published in *O Académico* often discuss a wide scope of cultural and scientific issues, for instance, from depictions of nudity in art, the importance of one of Indian’s most loved poets, Rabindranath Tagore, for Goan culture, to the transmutation of matter and how to observe radioactive substances. Many of these debates encompass the question of women and that is what I will discuss next.

## 1. Women writing about women, literature and the emancipation of Goan youth

In its first issue published in 1940, *O Académico* presents two texts written by women: “*Salve Mãi India*” (“Hail, Mother India”), by Jeanne Sylvie Lefèvre, a teacher at the professional school Maria Pia, in Lisbon, and president of the Theosophical Society of Portugal, and a short story by Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo (who

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4 Among her 108 names, Durgā is named as “the one with the colour red” (*pātālā*) and as “the one who is clothed in red” (*pātalāvati*) (SARASVATI, 1995, p. 28). In the second episode of the *Devī Māhātmya*, Durgā is the only one among the Hindu deities able to destroy Mahiṣāsura, a demon more powerful than the gods.

also published as Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo e Faria, after getting married), Jorge de Ataíde Lobo's sister. He was also one of the editors of *O Académico*.

"*Salve Mãi India*" was submitted to the editors of *O Académico* by R. S. Fontes (about whom we have not found any information) and celebrates India for the message of liberty the country propagates. There, Lefèvre opposes India to the Western world, saying that the latter is known for its science and erudition while the former is characterized as "the holder of the purest love and inexplicable dedication to humanity" (LEFÈVRE, November 1940, p. 15). Orientalists often adopt positions that express the association of feelings and femininity to the East as opposed to the rationality and masculinity that supposedly characterize the West. Such attitude seems to be rather far from what *O Académico* initially proposes, even though that is the position portrayed in the article. Perhaps, Lefèvre and her ideas were granted a space in the pages of the magazine because she held a high position in the Theosophical Society of Portugal.

In the same issue, in the section for children, "*A criança*" ["The Child"], directed by Jorge de Ataíde Lobo, Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo (1913-1944) publishes several of her short stories. The section plays a capital role when we take into consideration the objectives expressed in the editorial: "*A criança*" is meant to emancipate Goan children by putting them in touch with literature. Therefore, it is not surprising that the aforementioned section is directed by Jorge de Ataíde Lobo who, in his article "*O problema da carência do romance na literatura goesa*" ["The lack of novels in Goan literature"]<sup>5</sup>, laments that Goans do not have an intellectual novel connected to their reality and that education is crucial in order to form a writer who could create such novel and change this scenario. He suggests that children should be taught in secular and rational terms so that a "fair and necessary revolt will take place among young Goans". He adds that "... the spirit needs to be educated. May each student become fully aware that they have a beautiful and superior duty, which is to be a useful individual to society. More than that, to Humanity" (LOBO, March 1942, p.17 – my translation)<sup>6</sup>.

5 This article was divided into three parts and published in issues 7 (January 1942), 8 (March 1942), and 9 to 11 (May-September 1942).

6 "É necessário que se eduque o espírito. Que cada aluno adquira a consciência plena de que tem o dever superior e belo de ser um indivíduo prestante à sociedade. E mais do que isso, à Humanidade" (LOBO, March 1942, p.17).

Hence, the objective behind the short stories for children written by Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo in *O Académico* is revealed: to transform these children into useful individuals, guided by reason, who will be able to write the intellectual novel Jorge de Ataíde Lobo envisioned. In her first story, “*O indisciplinado*” [“The Unruly Child”] (LOBO, November 1940, p. 25), the narrator tells the story of Julio, an unruly child. The text itself is not very creative and does not use elaborate literary devices: it simply describes how Julio, who has always been disobedient, argues with friends who do not see eye to eye with him, criticizes his teachers, and misses classes in order to wander around the city. Later in life, he becomes an unruly adult who loses job after job, because he cannot cope with following rules. Broke and unable to pay his debts without his father’s help, he ends up running away from his creditors.

Though Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo does not use more elaborate literary devices, the short story works like a fable from modern times, since children are able to understand what is in between the lines of the plot in a relatively easy manner and learn the morals expressed in it: “My dear friend, always seek to obey older people, since they mean the best for you and your happiness when they demand something. Otherwise, you will meet Julio’s fate” (LOBO, November 1940, p. 25 – my translation).<sup>7</sup>

In “*A Caridade*” [“Charity”], Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo tells the story of a girl named Angela, who helps a poor widow and her handicapped son. If Angela is a true charitable soul, her cousin, Julia, on the other hand, is “vain and ridicules every good action practiced by Angela” (LOBO, January 1942, p.23). The opposition of the girls’ personalities in the story shows a much-discussed topic in the Western world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which is how a

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7 “*Meu amigo, procura sempre obedecer aos mais velhos, que eles, quando exigem qualquer coisa de ti, é por quererem o teu bem, a tua felicidade. Aliás, terás o mesmo destino que Júlio, o indisciplinado*” (LOBO, November 1940, p. 25).

girl should be educated. Mary Wollstonecraft<sup>8</sup> and John Stuart Mill<sup>9</sup>, in England, Nísia Floresta<sup>10</sup>, in Brazil, and Ana de Castro Osório<sup>11</sup>, in Portugal, argue that girls should not be taught to care about appearances only; they should be encouraged to follow moral principles and reason. In the short story, when Angela decides to sell a piece of fabric she cherished so that the widow could go to the doctor's, not only does she show that she has a resourceful and independent mind, but also that her moral values are not tainted by vanity, as are her cousin's.

In another version of the same short story, now named "*Dize-me com quem anda...*" ["You are Known by the Company you Keep"] (LOBO, July 1943, p. 18), the narrator provides more details about the girls' personalities: Angela is worried about her cousin's opinion on her dolls, dresses, and books and tries to keep everything neat and clean before her arrival. She is very influenced by her cousin's judgment. The cousin, who is not named in this version of the story, is described as being chic and exuding the superiority associated with city life. Everything else happens as in the first version of the story, except for the fact that now, the piece of fabric that Angela sells to help the widow was a gift from her cousin and Angela's charitable act motivates other villagers to help the poor widow. Moreover, in the second version, the reader witnesses how Angela changes in the story – she is, in the beginning, someone who is primarily more wor-

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8 "But I still insist that not only the virtue but also the knowledge of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree; and that women, considered not only as moral but as rational creatures, should try to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the same means as men, instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of half-being, one of Rousseau's wild inventions" (WOLLSTONECRAFT, 2009, p. 110).

9 "It is also to be considered, that all the education which women receive from society inculcates on them the feeling that the individuals connected with them are the only ones to whom they owe any duty - the only ones whose interest they are called upon to care for; while, as far as education is concerned, they are left strangers even to the elementary ideas which are presupposed in any intelligent regard for larger interest or higher moral objects" (MILL, 1879, p. 349).

10 "The absence of a good education is the cause of a woman losing her moral way amidst society's corruption. Aiming to restrain her intelligence and to weaken her senses, men try to make her unable to purify her heart, which is something she should do but will never accomplish advantageously if she remains uncultured. (FLORESTA, 1989, pp. 60-61, my translation).

11 "A woman who is not educated is much more inferior than a man because their own faults become their qualities, elevated by culture and changed by education. While the educated woman is resolute, the uneducated woman is rude; what is seen as observation in the former is considered prying in the latter [...]. The education of women is the most important issue to be developed and put into practice" (OSÓRIO, 1905, pp. 44-45, my translation).

ried about pleasing her cousin and maintaining appearances than about doing the right thing (so much so that, in “*Dize-me com quem andas*”, she does not even enter the widow’s house, whereas in “*A caridade*” she enters the house and offers a piece of bread to the widow). It seems that, in the second version of the short story, Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo wants to show how dramatically the character’s moral compass shifts and how her change of behaviour is so powerful that it prompts others around her to act kindly towards the widow, implying that anyone can inspire others to act negatively or positively according to the way they are influenced.

Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo publishes yet another short story in issue 12 in the section “*A criança*”. “*A ambição*” [“Ambition”] (LOBO, November 1942, p. 18) tells the story of Maria, a poor girl who is not happy with her condition. One day, while mending an old dress, she is visited by a pink cloud that changes into a woman who, according to Maria, was the personification of wealth – she had “golden hair”, “ruby lips” and teeth that looked like a string of pearls. When the apparition said that she would grant her a wish, Maria answered: “I want to turn things into gold when I touch them”. The wish makes it impossible for Maria to prepare her parents’ dinner, because when she touches the rice, it turns into gold. She clenches her fist in frustration, a needle pricks her finger and she wakes up from her dream.

Lobo seems to have drawn inspiration from the Greek myth of Midas, presented in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses XI* and later retold in *A Wonder-Book for Boys and Girls* in 1851 by the American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, who stated that that all stories rewritten in his book would have a moral (MILLER, 1991, p. 345). Lobo adapts the myth to the Goan context so that Goan children can easily relate to Maria and learn the lesson after reading her story. Beyond the moral aspect that connects Lobo’s short story for children to Hawthorne’s, there is also a reference to the dimension that the Ovidian myth is primarily aimed at, which, according to E. J. Kenney, is “metamorphosis, transformation, change” (1998, p. xiv).

In fact, all of Lobo’s short stories published in “*O Académico*” present two main elements: transformation and moral lessons. She shows that change towards behaving morally is possible for Goan boys and girls so that they can become useful individuals to Goan society and humanity. Moreover, Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo collaborates in fulfilling her brother’s wishes stated in his essay previously



mentioned here, "*O problema do romance na literatura goesa*", as her short stories for children aimed at the creation of writers as well.

Berta Menezes Bragança (1911-1993) also published in *O Académico* one of her short stories translated from English into Portuguese entitled "*Um sorriso apenas*" ["Only a smile"] (March 1941, pp. 12-13; 20-21). The story begins with a narrator who finds a pack of letters in the cabin of a train by a letter writer described as "pale, thin and nervous". As in a frame narrative, when the narrator starts reading the letters intradiegetically (inside the story), so do the readers at an extradiegetic level (outside the story).

As we (the readers in the real world) and the reader in the story go through the letters, we learn that they were addressed to a friend. There, the writer apologizes for having been distant for "centuries" and justifies his disappearance as a consequence of his love for isolation. Next, he writes to his friend about a sudden change in his character which had taken place because of a smile: one day, while he had been walking around the paddy fields, intoxicated by the beauty of the place and the colours of the day, he had seen a woman whom he regarded as an otherworldly vision due to her perfection. She looked at him, bowed and smiled, which made him feel as if "a divine fire had filled his heart" (BRAGANÇA, March 1941, p. 13). He could not recognize himself, because not only did he meet her every single day but also could not stop talking to her while she listened attentively and said very little. Eventually, she stopped going to the place where they used to meet and, after looking for information about her, he found out she was a teacher who might have been transferred to another school, as he learns that another woman has replaced her:

That other woman, a *nymph*, who was forever in my dreams, had also been a teacher at the official school. I gathered that she might have gone to another place, transferred to another school. And that *heavy, rude, horrendous* and *indecent* woman was her substitute! (BRAGANÇA, 1941, p. 20 – my translation).<sup>12</sup>

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12 "*Aquela outra figura, qual ninfa, que era o meu incessante sonho, também fora professora da escola oficial como esta. Concluí que devia ter ido para outro local, transferida para outra escola. E esta pesada, grosseira, horrenda e indecente era sua substituta*" (BRAGANÇA, March 1941, p. 20).

While he awards his muse positive characteristics, such as a *nymph* and a *dream*, he portrays the new teacher using negative words, like *fat*, *ungraceful*, *heavy*, *rude*, *horrendous* and *indecent*. The semantic connotations of the adjectives used objectify both women in the story, turning them into something desirable or undesirable. However, these points of view are played with within the text through the adoption of a framed narrative: after the reading of the letter is done, the narrator of the short story finds information about the man who wrote the letters. His name is Arcanjo and he is characterized as being “eccentric”, “kind of crazy” and “extremely myopic”. The narrator (who is, in the end, revealed to be a woman) says:

I remembered who she [the teacher] was and I was puzzled. Would that be true? I could barely believe it. That pale and sick girl who was so poor-spirited? Poor Arcanjo, short-sighted and in love. That smile was only a wry grimace idealised by myopia (BRAGANÇA, March 1941, p. 21- my translation)<sup>13</sup>.

Given that, we can state that Arcanjo’s nymph was very much like him, since the narrator uses similar adjectives to describe the pair (he is “pale, thin and nervous” whereas she is “pale, sick and poor-spirited”), showing that neither of them are perfect people; they are actually very common and very similar to each other. It is the able use of the frame narrative that allows the author to produce concomitant but opposing levels of meaning for her short story. While, on the one hand, the story is actually comic when the reader learns that Arcanjo was in love with a woman who never even existed, on the other hand a totally different effect is produced by subverting the idealised view Arcanjo had about his nymph, revealing a certain “disenchantment regarding men’s views on women” (WEIGEL, 1986, p.84), who should not be either venerated or humiliated, but equal to men. Moreover, the frame narrative shows that women are not only looked at by men (for instance, when Arcanjo uses negative and positive adjectives to characterize his nymph and the new teacher) but they also look back at

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13 “*Recordei-me. E fiquei perplexa... Seria verdade? Mal podia crer. Aquela pálida rapariga, doentia, de aspecto pobre de espírito? ... Pobre Arcanjo, míope e apaixonado. Aquele sorriso era apenas uma lastimosa careta, que a miopia idealizou*” (BRAGANÇA, March 1941, p. 21).

men (when the narrator, a woman, describes Arcanjo), reclaiming the power to return the gaze they are subject to.

Unlike Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo's short stories, Berta Menezes Bragança's text does not present a moral conclusion. It is also more elaborate, for it relies on narrative techniques, namely the frame narrative, to create a comic effect and to make her readers reflect upon the actions narrated at both levels rather than offering an explicit morale to her readers.

Another captivating piece Berta Menezes Bragança wrote for *O Académico* was the article "*Tagore Educador*" ["Tagore, The Educator"] (September 1941, pp. 8-9), in which she endorses Tagore's ideas for education, a subject which was important to her since she was a teacher at the *Escola Feminina* (School for Girls) in Margão (SAMARTH, 2012, p.7). According to Bragança, Tagore's *Visva Bharati*<sup>14</sup> provided "a genuinely national education that [aimed] to keep alive the superior qualities in Indian civilization rather than narrow and fanatic exclusivism" (September 1941, p.9 – my translation)<sup>15</sup>. Interestingly, when Bragança describes Tagore's pedagogical precepts, she points out that fanaticism has no place in India and, being herself a Catholic woman who was fully immersed in Indian culture, she stresses that Tagore does not exclude what is valuable in Western culture.

Berta Menezes Bragança was also interested in a model of education that valued Indian civilization because she was one of the first women to become a political activist in Goa who fought against colonialism, and, as Anil Samarth states, Bragança was "influenced by Gandhi's ideas, she insisted that the education of women of all countries was essential to achieve their liberation and social equality" (2012, p.7). In a way, we can infer here that the model Tagore proposes for the education of children does not exclude girls, who are also in the range of those who would benefit from the intellectual emancipation proposed by *O Académico*.

14 Visva Bharati is a public university in Shantiniketan, West Bengal, India. It was founded by Rabindranath Tagore on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1971.

15 "A instrução ministrada nesse centro de cultura é genuinamente nacional. Tem por fim manter vivo o que há de superior na civilização indiana sem que isso implique exclusivismo estreito e fanático" (September 1941, p. 9).

Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo (1882-1944) was another Goan teacher<sup>16</sup> and writer who published in many periodicals and held a prominent and participative position in Goan Catholic society. According to Ernestine Carreira, “[...] Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo was apparently the only female intellectual to have found her place and her voice in the publishing world. The only exception to the rule are a few passing pieces of literary writing” (2014, p. 554)<sup>17</sup>. Both of Figueiredo’s texts in *o Académico* deal with literary issues. “*Lições do Passado*” [“Lessons from the Past”] focuses on how short stories from the past, in particular those that concentrate on the common people rather than on kings and heroes, can also be considered as historical sources. She adds that “Young people who are preparing for disciplinary and disciplined action have much to learn from these literary compositions, ancient works of art and, at the same time, a lesson in social and domestic life” (1941, p. 2 – my translation). As Figueiredo states that ancient literary works of art can teach “a lesson in domestic life”, she is bent on showing that this type of literature plays a pedagogical role and, in so doing, she draws near to *O Académico*’s main intent, which is to emancipate Goan youth intellectually, just like Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo and Berta Menezes Bragança’s texts did.

In the same article, she presents to the reader a short story named “*O mesteiral tem... cabeça e coração*” [“The Worker has...a Head and a Heart”]. It portrays a king who is faced with an enigma by a foreign diplomat. The enigma has to be solved so that a war does not break out between the two kingdoms. However, none of the kings’ councillors is able to come up with a solution – even though they deliver sophisticated speeches to the court, their words are devoid of meaning. After struggling for some time, the courtiers decide to seek help and talk to a weaver living in a poor neighbourhood, in a very humble house but which contained some gadgets he himself had built. They are amazed by the weaver’s ingeniousness and he is taken to the court. Once there, he engages in a

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16 Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo worked at the Escola Normal de Goa as a teacher and, later on, as a principal.

17 Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo might have been one of the first women to publish her texts more consistently in the Goan Press, but we cannot say she was the only one. Berta Menezes Bragança was one of many Goan women who published frequently in the Goan Press, having been the editor of the bi-weekly newspaper “Free Goa”, which was published in Mumbai and advocated the nationalist cause. Maria Ermelinda dos Stuarts Gomes (1889-1937) was also a Goan teacher who frequently published in Goan and Portuguese periodicals.

silent intellectual battle with the foreign diplomat, in which they just look at each other while moving some objects on the floor. The king and his courtiers watch the battle in awe and, after winning it, the weaver explains what happened to the king, who, in his turn, asks the weaver to become one of his councillors. The weaver refuses the invitation and retorts, “I will feel pleased, my king, if, in the future, you convince yourself that, in order to have a happy reign, you must recognize that workers are more than their arms, but that they also have a heart and a head” (FIGUEIREDO, January 1941, p.2 – my translation).

Although Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo does not analyse the story, it does serve to prove that the reader can learn a lesson from this ancient story which is expressed in the weaver’s rather than in the narrator’s words: a governor must value his/her people, for they hold much wisdom that derives from experience. This teaching is also addressed to the young readers of *O Académico*, the ones who might occupy high governmental positions in the future.

Still concerned with literary matters, Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo and her husband, João de Figueiredo, write “*Os mitos de Sūrya*” [“The Myths of Sūrya”]<sup>18</sup> published in issues 9 to 12. In their article, the authors carry out a thorough study of classical short stories as well as of the elements that compose the imagination of a nation. Their analysis is divided in two parts, and focuses on the myth of Sūrya and how it is portrayed in several narratives.

In the first part, published in issues 9 to 11 (May - September 1942, pp. 12-14, 18), the authors analyse the theories developed by Max Müller, Sigmund Freud and Théodule-Armand Ribot in order to establish their own approach to the short story in terms of its origins and characteristics, the mythical and legendary aspects that compose the genre and the three types of traditional short story which they categorize as *primitive* (focusing on anthropomorphic animals or objects), *civilized* (focusing on people such as a prince, a tailor, a *curumbim* who lives in a distant land), and *heroic* (based on anthropopathic myths and on a distortion of classic epics). They justify their interest by stating that:

If short stories must become the object of a scientific study as Max Müller stated, the first work to be done is to investigate how each short story goes back to each legend and how each legend goes back to a primitive myth. As this task has already

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18 Sūrya is the sun-god in Hindu mythology.

been done regarding the most famous short stories that have been gathered in Europe so far, all that is left for us is to identify our short stories according to these classic types (FIGUEIREDO & FIGUEIREDO, 1942, p.14 – my translation)<sup>19</sup>.

Therefore, the end of the first and the second parts (published in issue 12 [November 1942, p. 8-9, 20-24]) concentrate on studying the symbols behind the legends and myths, connecting them to short stories, novels and poetry, and showing how these structures change according to the different stages of human development and how these symbols adapt to Western and Eastern cultures. According to the authors, symbols are renewed as society changes, thus, when these myths are employed as literary themes in the form of novels and poems, they feed the spirit of all men, of all ages and races<sup>20</sup> (November 1942, p. 24).

According to Helder Garmes (2018, p. 19), “*Os mitos de Súrria*” “is an extremely erudite work that reveals the authors’ concern with understanding the role this narrative genre, the short story, plays in the education of readers as citizens”. More than that, we can infer that “*Os mitos de Súrria*” is a great contribution to the theory of the Goan short story as well as to the studies on Goan literature in Portuguese since it can be characterized as a poetics of the Goan short story. Not surprisingly, it was published in the same issues as Jorge de Ataíde Lobo’s article on the need for a Goan novelist.

Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo, Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo and Berta Menezes Bragança had a prominent role in society because of two key factors: they belonged to families that were part of the Goan cultural elite and they had a career as teachers (as far as we know, among the women writers in *O Académico*, only Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo did not work as a teacher). Both of these circumstances, either combined or alone, made Ataíde Lobo and Menezes Bragança’s insertion in the public sphere much easier and demonstrate how some women

19 “*Se os contos, no dizer de Max Müller, devem tornar-se objeto de um estudo científico, o primeiro trabalho a empreender é o de fazer remontar cada conto a uma lenda, cada lenda ao mito primitivo. Desde que este trabalho já está feito relativamente aos contos mais célebres até hoje colhidos na Europa, só nos resta tentar identificar os nossos contos com esses tipos clássicos*” (FIGUEIREDO & FIGUEIREDO, 1942, p. 14).

20 Even though the concept of “race” is arbitrary and inappropriate it is used in the article by the authors, and that is why it is used here.

were an important part of the processes involved in the making of the periodical press in Goa directly, as writers, editors, or indirectly, by performing administrative tasks<sup>21</sup>.

Pratima P. Kamat, in her essay *From Conversion to the Civil Code: Gender and The Colonial State in Goa, 1510-1961*, states that:

A few Goan women, like Propécia Correia-Afonso de Figueiredo, Saraswati Vaidya and Vimala Devi, did carve a niche for themselves in Indo-Portuguese literature, but by and large, the rest of their sex has remained silent. Female voices were silenced from appearing in the registers of “high culture” by the restrictive hold of custom, the high rate of female illiteracy, and an absence of economic freedom and leisure time. Therefore, the world continued to be a “man’s word” and man “the word of the world” (KAMAT, 2000, p. 84).

Even though this is the true state of things for women in Goa, the presence of women writings in *O Académico* is rather profuse, so much so that the editors included a cover that renders a picture painted by Angela Trindade (July 1943, issue 13), as well as some texts written by Portuguese women, such as Odette Passos de Saint Maurice (May 1941, pp. 26-27). The mere presence of women as makers of cultural products indicates that the magazine encourages a change in the *status quo* concerning women in Goa and that the emancipation of young people also encompasses Goan women. There is a fact that must be highlighted, though: this emancipation is limited to a certain group of women in that society, namely the ones who could read and write in Portuguese, excluding those who did not have access to formal education in that language.

Hence, as Professor Pratima Kamat puts it, it is still “a man’s world and men are the word of the world” (KAMAT, 2000, p. 84). Therefore, in the next section, we will approach articles written by men that dealt with the question of women in Goa.

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21 In an interview with Alvaro da Costa and his sisters, Sitá and Shalini da Costa carried out by Professor Helder Garmes on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, Costa stated that his sisters and his mother helped in the administrative tasks that involved publishing and distributing the newspaper “*O Diário de Goa*” (1952-1966), directed by his father, Alvaro da Costa, and ran by the family. Sitá and Shalini da Costa later became teachers and now live in Margão.

## 2. A mediated picture: women as seen by men in Goa

In the scientific section of *O Académico's* third and fourth issues, the reader finds an essay entitled "*A mulher na ciência*" ["Women in science"], by A. J. Lima de Faria that discusses Marie Curie's professional achievements. Even though it is an essay that was published firstly in *O Diabo*, a Portuguese periodical, the very fact that it was made available to Goan readers by *O Académico* says something about their position regarding the transition of women from the domestic space to the academia. The text that precedes the essay (probably written by a Goan editor member of *O Académico*) starts with what could be understood as words of warning: "It is a good thing that men, who today benefit from Radiology Institutes, modern cancer therapy and the numerous applications of radium, know the admirable epic of Mme. Curie's life, in the selfless simplicity of her scientific work, and her deep disinterest in human vanities" (March 1941, p. 7 – my translation)<sup>22</sup>.

As the article narrates Mme. Marie Curie's struggle which culminated in the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, the writer wants men to acknowledge that women can do more for society if given the proper means to do so. It concludes by stating: "in every place in the world where science is practiced, women work in laboratories to conquer the unknown, working side by side with men, and with equal advantages to science" (May 1941, p.10 – my translation)<sup>23</sup>. It is suggested here that women should not be subjected to men, but that they should be seen as equals.

There also seems to be a strong interest in the condition of Hindu women, for there are two articles that deal with the topic indirectly, like "*Um livro notável da Sra. D. Hedwig Bachmann de Mello*", ["A Remarkable Book by Mrs. D. Hedwig Bachmann de Mello"] written by Renato de Sá (1942, p. 5-6; 20), and "*Um livro e um exemplo*" ["A book and an example"], by Antônio Miranda (1942, p. 8-10)

22 "É bom que os homens, que beneficiam hoje dos Institutos de Radiologia, na moderna terapêutica do Cancro e das inúmeras aplicações do rádio, conheçam a epopeia admirável da vida de Mme. Curie, na simplicidade abnegada do seu labor científico e no profundo desinteresse das vaidades humanas" (March 1941, p. 7).

23 "Em todos os pontos do mundo onde se fazia ciência, a mulher surgiu nos laboratórios à conquista do desconhecido, trabalhando ao lado do homem com igual proveito para a ciência" (May 1941, p. 10).



both of which concentrate on reviewing Hedwig Bachmann de Mello's book. She was married to the well-known Goan Doctor Froilano de Melo, who is also the convener of a short conference named "*A Mulher hindu*" ["The Hindu Woman"], published in 1927.

Renato de Sá provides the reader with some information on Hedwig Bachmann de Mello's book and, although we could not have access to the book, the description given by Sá's article in *O Acadêmico* depicts Indian women living in a mystic world, as he states that Bachmann de Melo had "dreamed of"<sup>24</sup>

[...] studying the soul of a distant country (...) covered by the *mystery* of the Himalayas, a country that created the sacred Vedas and Upanishads, whose secular philosophy haunted Western thinkers – like Max Müller and Goethe – and where women, patient and resigned, live only for their home and family, as in ancient times, in the old countries of the Asian *mystery*: "*Casta vivit, domum servavit, lanam fecit*" (January 1942, p.6 – my translation)<sup>25</sup>.

The use of words such as "mystery" to describe India as well as the references to Max Müller (who had already been mentioned by Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo and João de Figueiredo) and Goethe convey an Orientalist tone to the article which defines not only India and Asia, but also their women as odd and exotic. Furthermore, the Latin expression "*Casta vivit, domum servavit, lanam fecit*" ("she is chaste, serves the house and makes wool") presupposes that Indian (and Asian) women in general are, as a rule, pure and subservient, busy only with domestic chores. Such images reduce these women to the realm of domesticity and subject them to men. While praising Bachmann's book, Sá's article also combines Orientalism and Patriarchy, a double burden with which Asian women struggle.

24 Sá states that Bachmann had golden dreams related to studying Indian women (um "sonho doirado").

25 "*estudar a alma da mulher dum país distante (...), coberto pelo mistério dos Himalaias, país dos Vedas Sagrados e dos Upanishadas, cuja filosofia secular assombrou os pensadores do Ocidente – como Max Müller e Goethe – e onde a mulher, resignada e paciente, vive apenas para o lar e para família, como outrora nos velhos países do mistério Asiático: 'Casta vivit, domum servavit, lanam fecit'*" (1942, p. 6).

We should also point out what, in our opinion, the book and the article fail to provide to their readers. At the time these texts were written, there were many women in India who fought (and had already fought) to change their condition of subjection in that society, trying to transpose the barriers between the private and public spheres, such as Tarabai Shinde (1850–1910), Pandita Ramabai (1858–1922) and Kaminy Roy (1864–1933). In Goa, we can mention Maria Erme-linda dos Stuarts Gomes (1889-1937) and Propérícia Correia Afonso de Figueire-do as women who advocated publicly in favour of women’s rights to work and study.

In spite of rendering a problematic view on Indian women, Renato de Sá’s article is interesting in the sense that it chooses to deal with a woman scientist. Also, it distinguishes Bachmann de Mello’s work as being independent from her husband’s.

In the article *“Um livro e um exemplo”* [“A book and an example”] (1942, pp. 8 to 10), Antônio Miranda also congratulates Bachmann de Melo for her work and states that the book is based on proverbs that “constitute folk wisdom”. Folklore is the source that Bachmann de Mello uses to understand the psychology of Indian women as she could not speak India’s vernacular languages and had difficulty in talking directly with Indian women, who were shy as a consequence of “the effects of the purdah<sup>26</sup> system” (MIRANDA, May – September 1942, p. 8).

Miranda extols Bachmann de Melo for her take on India that does not put Indian and European women in a hierarchic relationship: “She did not come to the arena to point to public execration the defects Indian women have, just as other venal slanderers did, for example Katherine Mayo” (MIRANDA, May – September 1942, p. 9 – my translation)<sup>27</sup>. The reference to Katherine Mayo<sup>28</sup> reinforces how Miranda understands Bachman de Mello as someone who saw Indian women as her equals; as he puts it, she and Indian women were both daughters of mountains, the Alps and the Himalayas.

26 “Purdah, which can be formal law or informal custom, involves keeping women segregated from society, restricting their independence, and obliging them to dress in clothing that fully cover them” (HAUSWIRTH, 2006, p. 1).

27 *“Ela não desceu à arena para apontar a execração do público os defeitos das mulheres indianas, à guisa dos detratores venais, gênero Katherine Mayo”* (MIRANDA, p. 9)

28 American historian who was known as pro-imperialist and racist towards Indian people in general. Her views on India were expressed in her book *“Mother India”* (1937).

He also points out that Bachman de Mello wants to re-establish Indian women in a position in which they are not enslaved: “that is why along with the Orientalist Jacolliot she cries – India was only free when their women were free; India became enslaved when women became slaves” (MIRANDA, May – September 1942, p. 9), which is an important remark against women’s double subjection in the colonies: they are suppressed both by patriarchy and colonialism. This position contrasts with Renato de Sá’s article and is shared by other women writers in the Western world (mentioned in the previous section) who were fighting for their rights in the early twentieth century. However, when Miranda states that Bachmann de Mello does not “charge men as oppressors of her sex”, claiming that the oppression of Indian women is a result of a clash between Aryans (who adopted patriarchy) and Dravidians (who adopted matriarchy), he presents a rather simplistic solution to the underprivileged condition women have in society, which dissociates Bachmann de Mello from many of those women who fought for equality. As we could not read Bachmann de Melo’s book, we cannot state whether it was Miranda who diminished the impact of men’s oppression of women or if it was Bachmann de Melo who did not see it as one of the main factors in the unequal positions that men and women occupy in society.

In “*Os Mitos de Sória*”, Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo and João Figueiredo state that all civilizations share the same symbols in their narratives. Thus, could these symbols also exist in women’s psyche? We can only wonder whether Bachmann de Melo was able to go back to these folkloric myths and symbols in order to observe how they evolved throughout time until the 1940’s, when she wrote her book dedicated to depicting the psychology of the Indian women of her time.

Agostinho Carvalho, a Portuguese lawyer, writes *Mulheres da Índia* [“Women from India”] for issue 12 (November 1942, pp. 2-4; 19). The text aims to characterize Indian women to the reader and, to do so, he uses a variety of images. He begins his article by associating Eve with the downfall of humanity, defining women as the “perpetrators of the serpent’s work”. He then states that historically women have seduced men and caused their fall, setting as examples Delilah, Potiphar’s wife, Salome, Cleopatra and Mary Magdalene as examples. The use of imagery that derives from the Bible (Eve and Delilah, Putifar’s wife, Mary Magdalene) only reinforces the oppression that Christian ideology has histori-

cally exerted on women (BEAUVOIR, 1993, p. 103-114), turning women into the ones to blame for men's sins.

Later on, Carvalho employs a series of adjectives and their opposites to mark what characterizes, in his opinion, a good and a bad woman:

The woman, a *temptation, vase of sin or pitcher of virtues*, is always the best melody, the most captivating attraction and a complete gospel of love, as she was described by the writer of two millennia ago, the Indian Vatsyana, the Sage, who said that women can be classified into four groups, namely those who are *virtuous* as the pure lotus flower; those who are as *beautiful* as a painting; those who are *enchantresses* like a *witch* and those who are simply a *female elephant*" (November 1942, p.3 – my translation)<sup>29</sup>.

In his opinion women are assumed to be both sinful and virtuous, seductive enough to fit the established pattern of femininity but not so seductive that she might lose her virtuousness. Having that in mind, Carvalho proceeds to classify women into four types: two of them are connected to purity and beauty and the other two are linked to witchcraft, clumsiness and roughness. Taking these ideas into consideration, he starts describing women from different parts of India using adjectives which are semantically very close to the ones mentioned in the excerpt above. In addition to that, he adopts an Orientalist discourse by attributing exotic and sensuous qualities to these women.

To what extent do these characterizations of women give a full account of them as social beings? If we consider the Goan women who write for "*O Académico*", we might say that very little. Of course, they could have fulfilled the feminine roles expected of women at the times, but they were more than pictures to be observed, for they worked, wrote and were active in the political scenario of the society they belonged to.

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29 "A mulher, obra tentadora, vaso do pecado ou ânfora de virtudes, é sempre a melhor melodia, a atração mais cativante e só por si um completo Evangelho de Amor como a descreveu o escritor duas vezes milenário, o indiano Vatsyana, o Sábio, que disse que as mulheres podem classificar-se em quatro grupos, a saber, as que são virtuosas como a pura flor de lotus; as que são formosas como uma pintura; as que são feiticeiras como uma bruxa e aquelas que são simplesmente a fêmea de um elefante" (1942, p. 3).

The article “*Uma nação nas mãos de uma mulher*”, [“A Nation in the Hands of a Woman”] by Sanches de Souza (1942, p. 19-20) focuses on the Chinese Generalissimo’s wife, Mme. Soong Mei Ling. Sanches de Souza praises her for her diplomatic and political skills. The article extols the roles played by Soong Mei Ling and, in a way, supports the idea of women taking a political stand. Even though being a wife and mother are still considered as the foremost roles of women in society, there seems to be space for other ones, say that of the politician, the diplomat, or the worker.

### 3. Final considerations

To conclude, I would like to say that there are, indeed, some problematic views on the women portrayed in the pages of *O Académico*, namely the fact that some descriptions of Hindu women are filled with mythic characterizations, as in the articles written by Renato de Sá, Agostinho Carvalho, and Jeanne Sylvie Lefèvre that consider women as doubly subjected to both patriarchy and colonialism. That double subjection is often expressed through Orientalist ideas, which exaggerate and mystify the image of Indian women, combined with patriarchal views.

In spite of the presence of such texts on the pages of *O Académico*, the magazines’ ideal – to emancipate Goan youth – was most certainly among the many objectives Goan women like Propércia Correia Afonso de Figueiredo, Berta Menezes Bragança and Beatriz de Ataíde Lobo had when publishing their short stories and essays. More than that, on the very same pages, *O Académico* paves the way for Goan women to become subjects of their own writings. At a time that they were no longer restricted to the roles of wife, mother and sister, they could be educators, university students, politicians and scientists as well. It did not propose, though, to provide the same opportunities to those women who occupied lower positions in Goan society.

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